ENSEMBLE APPROACHES – Act 3 sc 2

Puck (right, Jonathan Slinger) and the fairies move Lysander (Trystan Gravelle) in the forest (2005 RSC production)

Watch the cast rehearsing this scene on the *Exploring Shakespeare* website. Gregory Doran's company worked as a very tight ensemble of players to achieve the sense of the fairy world conspiring against the lovers. In order to attain and maintain this tightly knit choreography, the company undertook a large amount of ensemble-based exercises. The exercises which follow are all based on work from the rehearsal room.

EXPLORING ENSEMBLE

Stop / Start: Ask the players to move around the room; establish a signal that you will give for them to stop walking and another signal to start walking. This could simply be a bang on a drum or a clap of hands.
Once the players have done this a few times, tell them that although you will give them the next stop signal, they will decide as a group when to set off walking again. Make clear that there can be no leaders nor signals given by any individual to indicate the time to start walking again. Encourage the group to trust their instinct to feel when 'the group' wants to start walking again.

Once the group have been stopped by you and have started themselves a couple of times, tell them that they are going to decide when to start and stop – again, with no leaders and no signals.

Movement 1-20: Players spread out through the room and stand spaced apart. The group must make 20 individual movements (eg: raising an arm, crouching down) with no two players making their gesture at the same time. If two people move at the same time, start again at 1. A teacher or group leader should count the movements silently and let the group know how many they achieve on each attempt. Try it a few times. How close to 20 can the group get? (This game can also be played with counting out loud instead of moving.)

Power puppets: Players work in pairs. One person is designated as puppet and one as mover. The mover can move any part of the puppet's body by indicating the part of the body they wish to move and showing them how it should move. When the mover is happy with the new position the puppet's body part has been formed into, they will indicate by a 'thumbs up' gesture that they want the puppet to keep that body part in its new position. After a few minutes of working in this way, swap over. Encourage the students to really explore how much movement they can get their puppet to make.

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